

WHEATON FACADE IMPROVEMENT GUIDELINES
2013

MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT
OF GENERAL SERVICES

WHEATON URBAN DISTRICT

START

Wheaton Facade Improvement Guidelines - 2013

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1.0 INTRO

The Wheaton Redevelopment Program, part of Montgomery County Department of General Services, and the Mid County Regional Service Center are pleased to offer the enclosed Guidelines for Façade Improvement. While created to assist participants in the Wheaton Façade Improvement Program, we encourage commercial property owners or businesses in Wheaton to use these guidelines when improving the appearance of their property or business.

By utilizing the following Guidelines as a toolkit for renovation and urban rebranding Wheaton property owners and businesses will be able to display a comfortable, inviting, coherent and improved commercial character. The following information represents simple, yet fundamental cosmetic architectural improvements which will produce maximum opportunity to showcase Wheaton's commercial potential.

We wish to express our deep gratitude to Chuck Witmer, AIA and principal of START Architects, for generously donating his time and talent to produce this guide.

2.0 IMPROVEMENT ELEMENTS

The guidelines seek to create unique blocks and the plan environments that no two individual facades will be identical. Not all new design elements need to line up. Building facades should have a clear identity that vary both horizontally and vertically. This shall be achieved through variation in color, windows, doors, lighting, greenery, signage, entries and canopies.

PAINT

Improving the appearance of a building can easily start with a few new coats of paint. These guidelines do not specify the colors but rather the paint selection process should fall in line with the businesses own individual color theme. The flexibility of this choice will allow for independence and at the same time promote a harmonious and coherent scheme which varies from building to building. The paint colors could range from general to detailed. Painting the storefront with a unifying color palette provides a great return on a small investment.



The background of the page is a photograph of a brick wall. The bricks are dark grey or black, laid in a traditional running bond pattern. To the right, a portion of a window frame is visible, featuring a dark metal or wood frame and a white interior pane. The lighting is bright, casting shadows that emphasize the texture of the bricks.

REPOINT - REPAIR - PATCH

Wheaton has a wide variety of mercantile building facades types. Many of which are older and would be well served with a minor face lift. It is important to align our renovation efforts in a way that maintains the certain identifiable charm of the area. Therefore, it seems essential to start by taking the time to clean up what is already there. If a building has crumbling mortar, dislocated bricks, or suffers from other minor cosmetic/non-structure blemishes, it would be important to address this before proceeding with other repairs. If the mortar is loose and not paintable, than it should be repointed. If bricks are dislocated or broken, they should be repaired, If there are small portions of brick that are in disrepair, they should be patched. If stucco and dryvit have dents and dings then they should be filled in and resurfaced.

LIGHTING

It is one thing to use paint to pronounce the beauty of a building during the daylight hours. One of the best ways to suggest and invite commerce in the evening along the block is to encourage the installation of attractive and evocative lighting fixtures. Good lighting can help unify the block by reinforcing and highlighting the presence of appreciating storefront and open businesses. Good lighting also pushes away any vagrant behavior by illuminating shadowy areas that can often be a refuge to individuals who might otherwise hamper shoppers from walking the block or visiting the businesses which are hoping to attract commerce. Good lighting can showcase signage, focus attention toward products in storefronts and generally enliven a unified streetscape.

GLAZING

Enlarging/maximizing storefront window presence. Glazing, often also known as storefront windows, is a critical aspect of a successful business attempting to attract shoppers passing by. It helps to promote the products inside the shop and stretches the interior experience of a building towards the streetscape. While boarded up buildings scream that a passerby has no business looking into shop, a well lit and clear storefront window suggests that a passerby come closer and view a taste of what is inside. Good glazing suggests transparency and a comforting reflection of what a passerby may enjoy if they come inside. A comprehensive glazing initiative which empowers store owners to further enhance or to add additional glazing to their facades will help to further engage passing shoppers and motorists. In the evening, glazing further illuminates the streetscape like lanterns guiding shoppers towards commerce.

PLANTINGS/GREENERY

It is obvious that vegetation helps to soften any urban streetscape. We all are aware that walking inside a concrete jungle does not promote meandering or prolonged street activity. No one appreciates being hemmed in along an anonymous maze of concrete sidewalk which seems to lack character, variety, or orientation. Vegetation and fixtures which house vegetation contribute to create a lush embellishment for a facade. Those features also helps to promote a warm narrative along an unified streetscape and offer a soft counterbalance against roughness of the built environment. Planters can be applied to the building as permanent architectural window fixtures or stand as independent planting fixtures which are extended into the sidewalk, acting as small anchors. Not only are planters and window boxes welcoming and refreshing, they are fundamentally a basic beautification element. Vegetation elements will unify the block by relaying a sense of rebirth and renovation that is a common goal of shop keepers. This low cost, welcoming, and warming influence will further help to pronounce Wheaton's effort to investment in the animation of it's commercial streetscape.



CANOPIES

Canopies and awnings are also architectural elements which help to enhance the presence of inviting and open businesses. Much like vegetation and planters, help to bring a human scale and feeling to a building and the streetscape. Canopies and awnings help to focus attention on specific business locations by providing surfaces for signage and by defining business entrances. Canopies serve a functional purpose by covering the entry from rain and sun. By investing in improving canopies, Wheaton will add a texture and character above the streetscape much like the planters and the improved windows help to enhance the street level environment.

SIGNAGE

Great looking signs could help to promote distinction and definition to the businesses along the street. By moving away from generic, cheap, undistinguished signs, the Wheaton district could enhance the flavor and appeal of the streetscape. These guidelines promote and assist business owners to develop unique signage while operating within a general theme. Commercial districts can gain a distinctive identity by offering a unifying signage theme with independent flexibility and thereby demonstrate a collective effort by the commercial district to be united and open to creative independence.



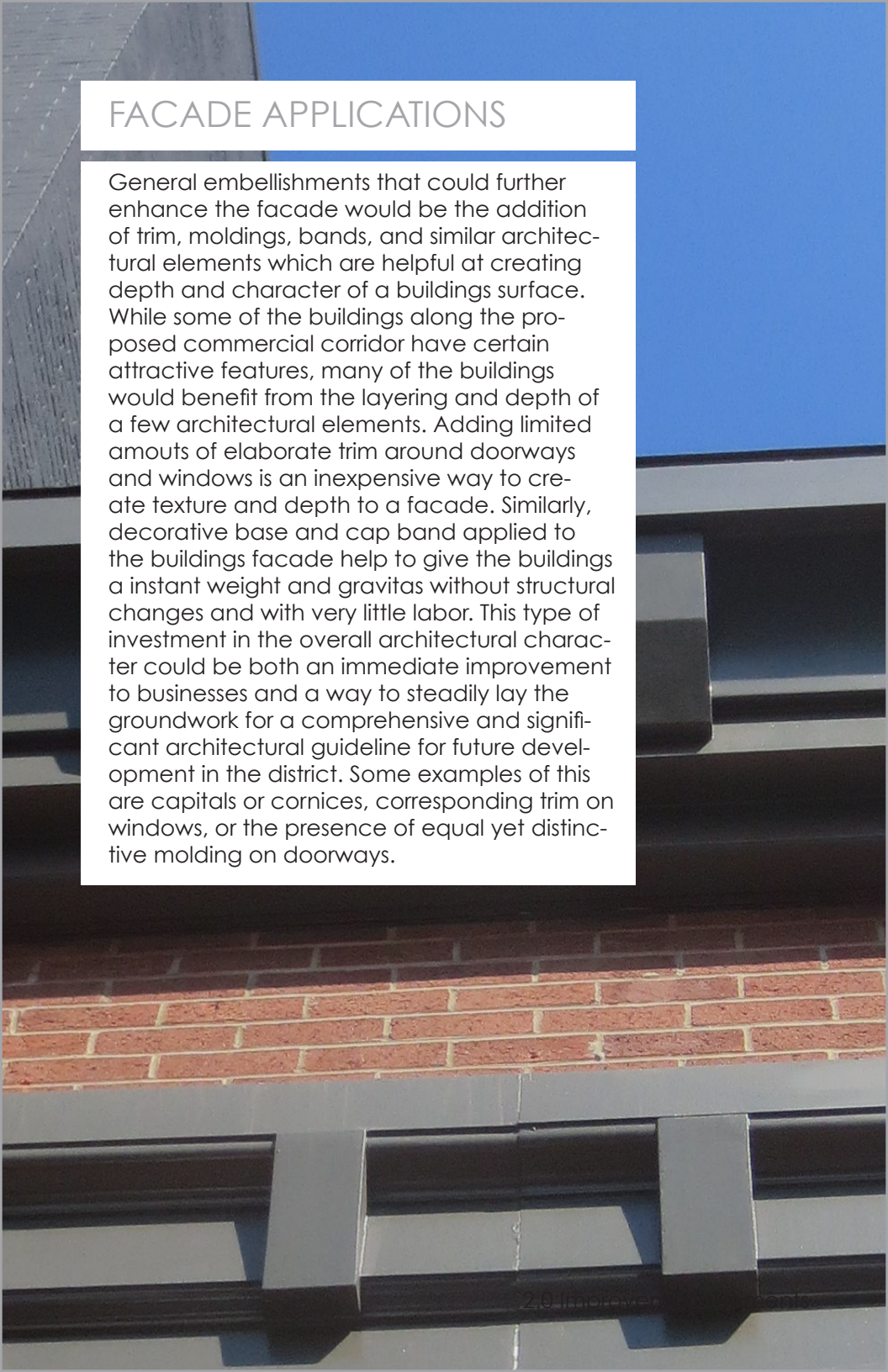
ENTRY

Improving the focus and character of pedestrian entrances to stores including colors of doors, interesting hardware, and distinctive feature. Eyes are the gateway to the soul just as a entry door to a business should be a clear indication of the interesting prospects that should exist within a shop. Door improvements could be as simple as providing more glass for transparency or more elaborate hardware like a modern door pull, push bar or hinges. Other improvements could include the presence of interesting graphics or a distinctive vibrant colors to highlight the entry to the business. Much of the door enhancements could be held in concert with the previously mentioned improvements to develop a comprehensive facade renovation.



FACADE APPLICATIONS

General embellishments that could further enhance the facade would be the addition of trim, moldings, bands, and similar architectural elements which are helpful at creating depth and character of a buildings surface. While some of the buildings along the proposed commercial corridor have certain attractive features, many of the buildings would benefit from the layering and depth of a few architectural elements. Adding limited amounts of elaborate trim around doorways and windows is an inexpensive way to create texture and depth to a facade. Similarly, decorative base and cap band applied to the buildings facade help to give the buildings a instant weight and gravitas without structural changes and with very little labor. This type of investment in the overall architectural character could be both an immediate improvement to businesses and a way to steadily lay the groundwork for a comprehensive and significant architectural guideline for future development in the district. Some examples of this are capitals or cornices, corresponding trim on windows, or the presence of equal yet distinctive molding on doorways.



3.0 IMPLEMENTATION YOUR TOOLKIT

This portion of the guidelines will show you where you can, in more specifics, implement the elements from Section 2.0 with visual instruction and examples.

TOP

The top of the facade is much like the finishing touch to the facade. It is an item that finishes off an ensemble, creates a clear distinction, a remarkable identity within a very small amount of space. The top of a building usually has a unifying common theme/element that is altered specifically by the individual. The top architectural zone is the area where shop owners can select individual colors, accents, and styles within a predetermined set to create a very personalized and individually specific character to the over-arching, underlying palette.

Applicable Elements may include:

Lighting

Paint

Signage



MIDDLE

The middle of the facade starts above the water table, which is usually in the range of 24" to 42" above grade. The middle of the building is where there is an effort to develop an architectural or stylistic ensemble, the area of a building where there is a complex coordination between the materials of the building, the windows, the doors, and other necessary elements. The middle is the area where the material often takes on a more colorful, charming character. It is the area where the trim color of glazing must coordinate with the color of the general material of the building, where the size and tone of the windows must work in harmony with the size and placement of the door.

Applicable Elements may include:

- Lighting
- Canopies
- Signage
- Glazing
- Paint



BASE

The base begins at ground or sidewalk level and terminates at the junction with the middle. The junction between the two zones is often denoted by a “water table”, which is typically an articulated surface (small bump-out) that serves as a lip for the glazing (windows) or, if there is no glazing, a change in the material palette. In this area, buildings are usually built with a heavy, course material which helps to promote or architecturally suggest a certain weight or foundation for the building.

Applicable Elements may include:

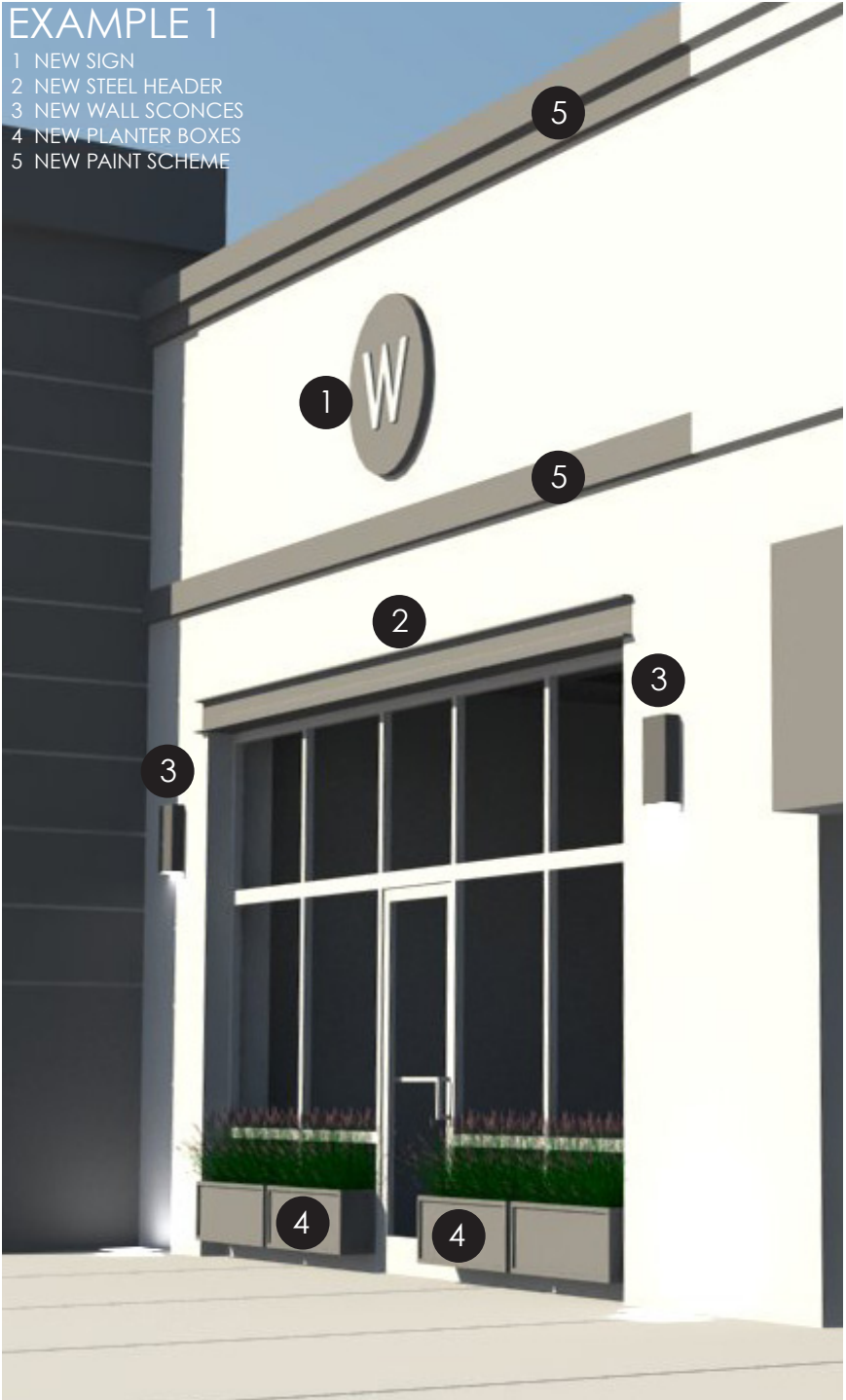
Lighting

Plantings/Greenery



EXAMPLE 1

- 1 NEW SIGN
- 2 NEW STEEL HEADER
- 3 NEW WALL SCONCES
- 4 NEW PLANTER BOXES
- 5 NEW PAINT SCHEME



EXAMPLE 2

- 1 NEW CORNICE
- 2 NEW RAINSCREEN SURFACE
- 3 NEW CANOPY WITH GREENROOF
- 4 RELOCATED EXISTING SIGN



EXAMPLE 3

- 1 NEW LIGHTING
- 2 NEW SIGN
- 3 NEW DOOR PULL



EXAMPLE 4

- 1 NEW CANOPY
- 2 NEW LIGHTING
- 3 NEW SIGNAGE
- 4 NEW RECESSED LIGHTS



4.0 SUMMARY

We envision that the ideas presented in this document will empower property and business owners of Wheaton to make good decisions now that will impact their future. Not all elements need be implemented. Following one doesn't mean that another one is necessarily mandated. We stress that these improvements are options; and they can be utilized at the business owners discretion, capability and comfort level. Assistance is a good idea, and engaging a professional, design oriented Architect is a requirement.

The goal of this document is to help Wheaton thrive, become a destination, and provide for the needs of the many new incoming residents. We want to re-align your business so that it can start attracting new business and at the same time develop stronger relationships with your existing neighbors.